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C O N F I D E N T I A L TEGUCIGALPA 002928

SIPDIS

DEPT. FOR WHA/CEN, DS/OP/WHA, AND S/CT
STATE PASS USTR

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TAGS: [PGOV](#) [ASEC](#) [PREL](#) [PTER](#) [ETRD](#) [PHUM](#) [SOCI](#) [HO](#)

SUBJECT: PEACEFUL DEMONSTRATION PROTESTS COLUMBUS DAY,
GLOBALIZATION, AND U.S. POLICIES OUTSIDE EMBASSY TEGUCIGALPA

REF: TEGUCIGALPA 2860

Classified By: Political Chief Francisco Palmieri;
Reasons 1.5 (b) and (d).

1. (U) On October 11 approximately 100 peaceful demonstrators protested outside Embassy Tegucigalpa. The protesters included representatives of the Convergence of Movements of the Peoples of America (COMPA), the public university worker's union (SITRAUNAH), the Civil Council of Indigenous and Popular Organizations and Ethnic Groups of Honduras, and the loose political alliance known as the Popular Block.

2. (U) The demonstrators protested against a number of issues, including Columbus Day, Plan Puebla Panama, Plan Colombia, the planned Free Trade of the Americas (FTAA), globalization, the proposed privatization of municipal water services, and U.S. policy on Iraq. It received front page coverage in the major newspapers. Aldo Mauricio Calderon, a journalist for the San Pedro Sula newspaper El Tiempo, helped choreograph the protest, something he has done at past anti-U.S demonstrations. Ericka de Ramirez, the reigning Miss Honduras from the Garifuna community who has traded accusations with pageant organizers, led a similar peaceful protest in La Ceiba (the third largest city in Honduras) and called for observance of women's rights.

3. (SBU) Honduran security forces notified RSO in the hours prior to the demonstration that two busloads of indigenous people had been sighted en route to Tegucigalpa from La Esperanza, a town four hours from Tegucigalpa. The approximate number of occupants of the buses matched the rough number of indigenous protesters later witnessed in the demonstration outside the Embassy. These "protesters for hire" had been allowed to enter the city and after completing a peaceful protest were most likely paid for their services prior to leaving Tegucigalpa, a pattern that has been observed many times in the past. Post notes that few of the demonstrators, other than the leaders, appeared to be from Tegucigalpa.

4. (C) COMMENT: While much tamer than protests in previous years, the GOH has reacted very nervously to these demonstrations. The Minister of Defense and the Minister of Public Security (Police) separately asked if the Embassy was noticing an increase in activities by leftists groups in the country or whether we had any information about these groups arming themselves again a la the 1980's armed Patriotic Morazan Front. They acknowledged that their concerns were a bit exaggerated but noted that a recent spate of bomb threats in Tegucigalpa (directed at government offices) and San Pedro Sula had prompted them to ask their intelligence units to monitor the situation. END COMMENT.
PALMER